

Tavistock Adult Depression Study

Information for the Public

This research study hopes to find out whether psychoanalytic psychotherapy is helpful for people who have been severely depressed for a long time.

Depression is very common. Some people feel able to see their doctor when they feel depressed and if necessary, the doctor can help by prescribing 'anti-depressants'. However, for some people, anti-depressants are not helpful and the person continues to feel depressed. Some people can be depressed for many years.

In this study, patients are referred to the study by their doctor. They will have been depressed for at least 2 years before being referred and they will have tried anti-depressants at least once. They will also have tried at least one other treatment which may be another type of anti-depressant, or it may be counselling. This kind of depression is sometimes called 'refractory depression'.

This study is a 'trial'. This involves taking a large group of patients with the same problem (in this case refractory depression). The patients are divided randomly into two groups – one which receives psychotherapy and one which remains in the care of their GP. This is in order to compare the two groups over time to find out how psychotherapy compares with other kinds of treatment that a GP may try. This kind of trial is thought to provide good evidence that a treatment is helpful.

Psychoanalytic psychotherapy is a 'talking treatment'. In this study, the treatment involves the patient meeting their therapist once a week for an hour to talk about their difficulties. The therapist aims to understand the patient's inner world and to help the patients understand. Treatment lasts for 18 months.

It is important to find out whether this kind of treatment is helpful for people with refractory depression. This is because the treatment is available in the NHS and we do not yet know how helpful it is. We also know very little about the best way to help people with refractory depression because so far, not enough research has been done. The results of the study will be reported in medical journals. In addition, the research team will work with patient groups to write reports of the results for the public. These reports will be made available on websites and patient newsletters.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please see the patient leaflet for further details.